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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NICOSIA 000503

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TU](#) [EUN](#) [UN](#) [CY](#)
SUBJECT: TURKISH CYPRIOTS UNDERWHELMED BY FIRST UN-BROKERED
"TECHNICAL" MEETING

REF: A. NICOSIA 454

[1](#)B. NICOSIA 352

Classified By: Ambassador Ronald Schlicher, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) The Turkish Cypriots were "disappointed" by the first UN-brokered meeting to discuss the way ahead on technical talks, according to "President" Talat's Under Secretary Rasit Pertev. Held in Nicosia on March 31, the meeting brought together UNFICYP Chief and SRSR Michael Moeller, ROC Presidential Diplomatic Advisor Tasos Tzionis, and Pertev. The three representatives agreed to meet again "as soon as this week," Pertev told us -- but had promised not to discuss the March 31 meeting with outside parties.

[1](#)2. (C) Talat's Private Secretary Asim Akansoy (please protect) gave us a more extensive "off the record" debrief, however, reading from what looked like Pertev's report to Talat. According to Akansoy, the Turkish Cypriots used the meeting (as well as a March 27 conversation between Talat and Moeller -- ref A) to underscore their position that working-level talks on the pre-agreed list of ten "technical" topics could begin at any time (ref B). But the Turkish Cypriots would not discuss "substantive" matters related to a final settlement deal unless the Greek Cypriots presented a clear and prioritized list of changes they sought in the Annan Plan, "as the UN and others have been demanding since 2004."

[1](#)3. (C) Tzionis, however, reportedly insisted on "bottom-up" negotiations that must/must include "other matters with political implications" (such as a population count, the development of Greek Cypriot property in the north, and other unspecified economic issues). Otherwise, according to Akansoy, the Greek Cypriots would refuse to engage even in technical talks. When Pertev pushed back on this point, Tzionis reportedly reiterated that the Annan Plan was "not on the table" and that the Greek Cypriots would therefore not propose any amendments, prioritized or otherwise. Instead, according to Akansoy, Tzionis had said the parties should dust off the 1977 "High Level Agreement" as a point of departure for negotiations. An incredulous Akansoy commented that this was ridiculous -- the main elements of the 1977 agreement (that a solution should be based on a bizonal, bicomunal federation) had been accepted by both sides for decades, while the text of the accord was "too vague on too many issues" to serve as a realistic settlement blueprint.

[1](#)4. (C) According to Akansoy, the March 31 meeting broke up without any agreement on whether to include "political" issues in the talks -- and therefore without any progress on the agenda or shape of technical discussions. He reiterated Talat's "firm position" that there would be no discussion of any subject beyond the ten agreed technical points until and unless the Greek Cypriots presented their list of changes to the Annan Plan. Given Tzionis's apparent unwillingness to do

so, Akansoy noted that Talat was pessimistic that the next meeting would accomplish much.

15. (C) Although he avoided describing the March 31 meeting in detail, Pertev nonetheless echoed Akansoy's general pessimism about the prospects for these talks. He implored the United States, specifically, to "give a strong message to Moeller" that the technical talks must go ahead and that the UN should not allow Papadopoulos to hold these talks "hostage" to progress on a deadlocked political track. At the same time, he asked us to reinforce the message that the Turkish Cypriots would not consent to discuss substance until they had the list of Greek Cypriot changes to the Annan Plan. "As long as Papadopoulos is unwilling to do this," Pertev contended, "it is clear he is not serious about real negotiations."

16. (C) After giving us his readout, Akansoy went on to describe the Turkish Cypriots' "continued worries" about SRSG Moeller's suitability as a mediator, calling into question his grasp of the complexities of the Cyprus problem. Using a Turkish proverb, he compared the enthusiastic Moeller to a child who has bitten off more than he can chew, dirtying his face and choking on his food in the process. For example, Moeller supposedly told Talat on two occasions that the Greek Cypriots "had already given" their desired changes to the Annan Plan -- insisting that "he had seen somewhere" a much more specific list than the vague "areas of concern" given by Tzionis to U/SYG Prendergast in 2005. "This is clearly not true," Akansoy said, pointing to Tzionis's unwillingness to discuss the Annan Plan on March 31. "What's he talking about?" Akansoy asked rhetorically. The Turkish Cypriots had repeatedly asked Moeller to share the purported list of changes, he continued, but to no avail.

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17. (C) Akansoy also repeated the Turkish Cypriot suspicion that Moeller was not an honest broker. As an example, he noted the claim by GOC Spokesman Lilikas that Papadopoulos and Talat had agreed to meet to discuss the work of the Committee on Missing Persons (CMP). This was not true, Akansoy stressed. Pointing out that Talat was willing to see Papadopoulos "in the context of" the CMP (perhaps at a future reception to honor the appointment of the UN's third member), he had "definitely not agreed" to discuss the substance of the Committee's work with the Greek Cypriot leader. The CMP, Akansoy said, was the "one thing on this island working well" so there was "nothing to discuss." According to Akansoy, Moeller had agreed to issue a press release clarifying what Talat had actually agreed, but had later "backed down under Greek Cypriot pressure."

18. (C) Pertev recounted essentially the same story, adding that any meeting between the two leaders in the context of the CMP would be a "frosty photo op" devoid of substance. Pertev added that the Turkish Cypriot side would probably, however, give its consent to the UN's candidate for the third member slot on the CMP "in a couple of days."

19. (C) COMMENT: Ambassador Schlicher will see SRSG Moeller on April 6 -- and we are also seeking readouts from Greek Cypriot sources -- to triangulate a more complete picture of what happened on March 31 and get a sense of where the process will go from here. Even considering the one-sidedness of the Turkish Cypriot readout, it seems clear that the parties are still far from agreement on even the most basic procedural issues. For their part, the Greek Cypriots are still enjoying the sense that they continue to have momentum created by the February 28 Paris meeting, and by bumbling Turkish Cypriot reactions thereto. The Turkish Cypriots would do well to find ways to avoid letting Papadopoulos paint them into the naysayer's corner. The UN definitely has its work cut out for it. END COMMENT.
SCHLICHER